

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 202397

STADIS////////////////////////////////////
FOR MURPHY FROM SOBER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SY, US

SUBJECT: MEETING OF LOCKHEED OFFICIALS WITH ACTING
ASSISTANT SECRETARY SOBER

1. ON 12 AUGUST 77, ATHERTON RECEIVED LETTER FROM LOCKHEED
PRESIDENT ASKING FOR STATE APPROVAL OF EXPORT LICENSE TO
SELL TWO C-130H AIRCRAFT TO SYRIA. ON JULY 27, LOCKHEED
HAD SIGNED CONTRACT WITH THE SYRIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE TO
THIS EFFECT. CONTRACT CONTAINED PROVISION FOR CANCELLATION
ON 1 OCTOBER 77 IN ABSENCE OF INDICATION THAT CONSIDERATION
OF EXPORT LICENSE WOULD BE FAVORABLE.

2. LOCKHEED REPRESENTATIVES FOLLOWED UP WITH MEETING WITH
ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY SOBER, ON AUGUST 24. SOBER
INDICATED THAT STATE WAS UNABLE TO APPROVE THE LOCKHEED RE-
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QUEST TO SELL THE C-130'S, SINCE IT WOULD IMPLY THAT THE
USG WAS READY TO ESTABLISH A MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP
WITH SYRIA, WHICH WE WERE UNABLE TO DO AT THIS TIME.

3. LOCKHEED REPRESENTATIVES THEN ASKED WHETHER DEPARTMENT
OFFICIALS COULD ENTER INTO UNOFFICIAL DISCUSSIONS WITH
SYRIAN GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A FUTURE SUPPLY

RELATIONSHIP (HENCE PUTTING IN A GOOD WORD FOR LOCKHEED RE FUTURE SALES). SOBER INDICATED THAT THIS WAS IMPOSSIBLE AT A TIME WHEN THE SALE OF MILITARY CONFIGURED EQUIPMENT WAS A POLITICAL ISSUE, AND WE COULD NOT MAKE ANY COMMITMENT WITH REGARD TO A FUTURE SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP.

4. SOBER THEN RAISED QUESTION AS TO HOW LOCKHEED REPRESENTATIVES WISHED TO HAVE THEIR LETTER HANDLED, WHETHER THEY WISHED TO RECEIVE A WRITTEN (NEGATIVE) RESPONSE OR WHETHER THEY MIGHT WISH TO AVOID THE LATTER BY SETTling THE MATTER "ORALLY" AND WITHDRAWING THE LETTER OF REQUEST THEMSELVES. LOCKHEED REPRESENTATIVES AGREED THAT THE LATTER COURSE WAS PREFERABLE, THOUGH BEFORE TAKING BACK THE LETTER THEY WISHED TO CONSULT LOCKHEED PRESIDENT.

5. LOCKHEED REPS THEN ASKED SOBER FOR GUIDANCE ON HOW THEY SHOULD DEAL WITH SYRIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, IN ORDER TO KEEP OPEN THEIR LINES OF COMMUNICATION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE SALES OF MILITARY AIRCRAFT. SOBER INDICATED THAT HE WOULD GIVE SOME THOUGHT TO SUBJECT AND WOULD RELAY ANY IDEAS FROM THIS END.

6. WE ADOPTED ABOVE COURSE BECAUSE WE WANTED TO AVOID THE FRICTION WHICH AN OUTRIGHT, ONCE-AND-FOR-ALL WRITTEN REFUSAL MIGHT INFLICT ON U.S.-SYRIAN RELATIONS. IN LIGHT OF OUR TEMPORIZING POSTURE, WE WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE
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ANY THOUGHTS THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE ON: (1) WHAT LOCKHEED MIGHT SAY TO SYRIANS SO AS TO MINIMIZE FLAK THAT LOCKHEED WILL GET FROM DEFENSE MINISTRY AND KEEP OPEN POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE SALES TO SYRIA; AND (2) HOW TO MINIMIZE THE POSSIBLE DAMAGE TO U.S./SYRIAN RELATIONS THAT OUR TEMPORIZING STANCE ON C-130'S WILL HAVE. CHRISTOPHER

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